AUGUST 2003

AMANNEE

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COVER PHOTO: U.S. Ambassador Mrs. Mary Carlin Yates, shake hands with one of the recipients of this year's Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF), at her residence. (See Story on page 14.)

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LITERATURE:

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE BRIDGE

By Sven Birkerts

One of the more interesting things about writing criticism for many years is that from time to time I am called upon to revisit a particular author or development, at which point I usually discover not only how much my tastes and inclinations have changed, but also that my subjects have refused to stay embalmed in the mummy-wrap of what I used to think. This has been borne out most vividly recently, as I have been asked to venture a concise overview assessment of the state of American literature -- fiction and poetry -- in the new millennium.

Ever the overworked opportunist, I returned first to a reflective survey essay I had written just over a decade ago entitled "The Talent in the Room." The intent of that piece had been very similar — to spotlight the major trends and talents in the world of literary fiction. My hope was to salvage at least the foundation and frame of the former structure. Alas, as soon as I began reading I saw that it was not to be. Somehow, while I'd had my eye on the foreground action, reviewing this and that writer, the background had quite steadily — and surprisingly — shifted.

In that earlier essay, bouncing off polemics by Norman Mailer (his own 1959 essay, "Evaluations — Quick and Expensive Comments on the Talent in the Room"), as well as Tom Wolfe' s rabble-rousing " Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast: A Literary Manifesto for the New Social Novel," published in Harper's in 1989, I had concluded that contemporary American fiction was in a state of retreat. As more and more writers found themselves unable to deal convincingly with a radically transformed postmodern electronic society, there was a large-scale movement to a simpler world-picture. Instead of taking on the urban information culture, novelists and short story writers went toward rural and small-town subject matters, taking either minimalist or maximalist approaches.

I considered in this context, among others, Russell Banks, Richard Ford, Ann Tyler, Ann Beattie, William Kennedy, John Updike, Sue Miller, and Joyce Carol Oates, all of them presenting powerful versions of American experience, but none of them addressing — so I thought — the subject I then deemed central. There were exceptions, of course, notably Don DeLillo, Thomas Pynchon, Robert Stone, Richard Powers, Paul Auster, Toni Morrison, and Paul West, writers I saw as more attuned in their work to the vibrations of these transformations. But even taking these exceptions into account, my overall assessment was guardedly pessimistic.

Ascent of the New Generation

I am fascinated and heartened by how much has changed in the 10-plus years since I wrote "The Talent in the Room," though the change has come not by way of re-volutionary insurgency but more by incremental shifts and displacements. It has been a matter of younger talents coming of age — sensibilities more school ed in the new, postmodern way of things — and older writers in many casesceding their long-held places in the spotlight.

Some of the new faces on America's literary scene.(Jason Schmidt)

The biggest transformation, I would say, has been the ascendancy of a new generation of highly ambitious writers who are at once panoramic in their impulses and attuned to our collective arrival in a hypercomplex and polyglot info-culture. The best known of these is probably novelist Jonathan Franzen, whose *The Corrections*, a highly articulate and many-stranded story of two generations of the Midwestern Lambert family, rode the 2001 best-seller lists for many months. The author reminded serious readers everywhere that it was possible to tell a page-turning good story while honoring the fractured complexity of life in our post-everything era.

Other highly visible and critically respected members of Franzen's 40-something generation include the prolific polymath Richard Powers. Powers followed *Plowing the Dark*, his seventh novel, an exploration of the implications of virtuality (the digital stimulation of "reality") with *The Time of Our Singing in 2003*, a mammoth saga of a mixed-race family that fused music, racial politics, and theoretical physics. There is also Jeffrey Eugenides, author of the generational angst-classic *The Virgin Suicides*, whose newest novel, *Middlesex (2002)*, combines elaborate historical sequences with the coming-of-age travails of a transsexual. David Foster Wallace remains for many younger readers the standard-bearer of the new ethos of fragmentation and cultural displacement; his leviathan novel Infinite Jest (1996) is the bench mark work, what Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* was for readers a few decades back, while the more recent stories of *Brief Interviews With Hideous Men* immerse the reader in disturbingly obsessive personalities.

Slightly younger talents include Rick Moody, who writes with serious reach in various genres, including the short story (*Demonology*), the novel (*Purple America*), and the memoir (*The Black Veil*), as well as Colson Whitehead, the young African-American novelist who, after marking his edgily whimsical debut with *The Intuitionist*, a novel about an elevator inspector, joined the maximalist cadre with John Henry Days, a broadly conceived satire of present-day race relations in collision with the culture of media boosterism. David Eggers scored a tremendous popular success a few years back with his energetic hybrid novel/memoir *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, which fused a personal confessional impulse with the narrative licentiousness of fiction.

A.M. Homes, Joanna Scott, and Helen DeWitt, three women writing determinedly outside the domestic pigeonhole (old ste-

reotypes live on), match their male colleagues in inventiveness and a willingness to take on the zeitgeist, though none has achieved the popular success of Alice Sebold (*The Lovely Bones*), Janet Fitch (*White Oleander*), or Ann Packer (*The Dive From Clausen's Pier*) — each one, interestingly, a novel that turns on the premise of a traumatic loss.

An Internationalist Perspective

Another conspicuous trend-shift worth remarking on has been the infusion of an internationalist perspective and subject matter into the literary mainstream. Chinese-born novelist and story-writer Ha Jin, in *Waiting* and, recently, *The Crazed*, has opened the door to narratives from the period of China's Cultural Revolution. Ukrainian-American Askold Melnyczuk, in *Ambassador of the Dead*, makes vivid the surfacing of suppressed World War II horrors in the lives of two families of Ukrainian-Americans, while Sarajevo-born immigrant Aleksandar Hemon, author of the story collection *The Question of Bruno*, in his novel *Nowhere Man* plies between past and present in the life of a young Sarajevan man living in present-day Chicago. Chang-rae Lee, in *A Gesture Life*, subtly dramatizes the life of a Korean-born Japanese man living in America and trying to evade the ghosts of his compromised past. Pulitzer Prize-winner Jhumpa Lahiri, in *Interpreter of Maladies*, and Junot Diaz, in *Drown*, are among several younger writers who use the short story form to study the complex frictions that come with living in the ethnic divide, Indian-American and Dominican-American, respectively.

A similar impulse — only expressed through reversed perspectives — is found in novels like Arthur Phillips's *Prague* and Jonathan Safran Foer's best-selling *Everything Is Illuminated*, both of which probe lives in other cultures from the vantage of Americans living and traveling abroad. Where Phillips refracts our recent cultural period through the experiences of a group of American expatriates living abroad — not in Prague, in fact, but in Budapest (the novel's little joke) — Foer depicts the encounter of a young American traveler (named Jonathan Safran Foer) with the ancestral past in contemporary Ukraine.

These several developments stand out against what remains a powerful mainstream continuity. The various modes of American realism continue to find strong representation in the works of writers like Richard Ford, William Kennedy, Sue Miller, Ward Just, Andre Dubus III, Peter Matthiessen, and Philip Roth (whose recent trilogy comprising *American Pastoral, I Married a Communist*, and *The Human Stain* stands as one of the signal accomplishments of the past decade). No less "real" but stylistically more elaborate variations are presented in works by Annie Proulx and Cormac McCarthy, as well as John Updike, William Vollmann, and others.

Of the making of lists there is no end. At certain points the broader typologies break down and one starts ticking off the sui generis talents: the more assertively experimental stylists like Robert Coover, David Markson, Mary Robison, and George Saunders; the divergently uncanny storytellers like Paul Auster, Paul West, Mark Slouka, Howard Norman, Charles Baxter, Douglas Bauer, Jonathan Dee, Allen Kurzweil, Alan Lightman, Michael Chabon, Margot Livesey, Maureen Howard, T.C. Boyle, and Ann Patchett; the voice-driven southerners like Padgett Powell, Lewis Nordan, Jill McCorkle, Elizabeth Cox, Lee Smith, Nancy Lemann, Barry Hannah, Donna Tartt, and Ellen Gilchrist. There should be a separate slot for the astonishing magnifications of the ordinary by Nicholson Baker, from his debut novel, *The Mezzanine*, to the recent *A Box of Matches*, which built a whole narrative out of a middle-aged man's early morning musings by his fireplace. Have I forgotten anyone?

Profile: Novelist Jill McCorkle

Jill McCorkle

One of the hallmarks of American literature is a sense of place. Writers from the southern United States in particular — William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, and Tennessee Williams, to name just three - are well known for conveying their depictions of this unique region.

Jill McCorkle is one of the heirs to that tradition, albeit her work reflects a New South through which interstate highways flow and in which suburbia and transiency have become irreversible realities. But in her five novels and two collections of short stories, McCorkle has maintained and enhanced the oral tradition that is so much a part of southern — and rural — culture. She once referred to her style as "the historical meandering method of storytelling."

McCorkle, a North Carolina native, burst on the American literary scene in 1984 at age 26 — having graduated from college and from a master's degree program in writing — with two novels, *The Cheer Leader and July 7th*, published simultaneously. McCorkle was one of the fiction writers taken under the wing of her publisher, Algonquin Books, a small, independent publisher of quality fiction and nonfiction books based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. With seven works now in print, she and Algonquin have enjoyed a fruitful relationship over the years.

McCorkle's stories are laced with down-home humor, yet they are rooted in human struggle. "I write about people who are figuring out where they fit in society and how to reach a certain level of acceptance," she once said. "Oftentimes I start out with an idea just because it is funny, but then I like to find the darker part of the story." Paying tribute to her deft comic touch and her keen eye for southern manners, one critic noted that "her vision is also similarly humane, revealing the foibles of her characters but withholding harsh judgments or violent epiphanies."

The southern women she has created in novels such as *Carolina Moon and Tending to Virginia* — which she considers her most satisfying books — range from teenagers to the elderly. The way she interweaves their lives suggests her desire to embrace human relationships and extol the continuity of life. While rooted in the South, her writing touches universal themes — perhaps the reason why her books have been translated into more than a dozen languages.

The most recent collection of stories by McCorkle, who now teaches writing at Harvard University and Bennington College, is *Creatures of Habit*, published in 2001. As one observer put it, the tales represent "what coming home should be but so seldom is — comforting, clarifying, and irresistible."

A Conversation With Jason Epstein

Over a half-century as an editor and publisher, Jason Epstein has set a standard for publishing in the United States. As founder of Anchor Books, he established quality paperback books as an alternative to the mass marketing of soft-cover volumes. Epstein was editorial director of Random House; co-founded the prestigious literary journal The New York Review of Books; created the Library of America to bring to the market exquisite editions of classic American fiction, nonfiction, and poetry; and pioneered research and experimentation to bring book publishing in line with the computer age. Epstein was the first recipient of the National Book Award for Distinguished Service to American Letters in recognition of his work in "inventing new kinds of publishing and editing."

Q: Is this a good time for books in the United States?

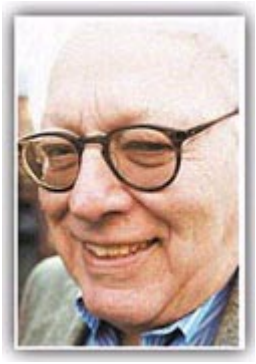
A: The nonfiction being published today is as interesting as what we were publishing 20 or 30 years ago, perhaps more so. Good historians, both amateur and professional, have learned how to address general readers, and the interest in first-rate historical writing has expanded accordingly. The same is true for science, where writers have also learned how to speak to non-specialized readers. As far as I can tell, the editors who select and edit these books are highly qualified professionals who know not only how to prepare a manuscript for the printer but how to call books to the attention of readers.

Fiction is another matter, and this I believe reflects a cultural problem endemic to First World cultures. The current generation of fiction writers has not produced as many world-class talents as one might have hoped. There is no shortage of interesting work, but there are no new Mailers or Roths or Hellers or Doctorows or DeLillos in sight — writers whose work is obligatory for serious readers. I wonder if the devastating wars of the 20th century help explain this phenomenon. The most interesting new writers are from India, China, Latin America, and even Iceland, and it is reasonable to expect that, from the large Latino and Asian populations in the United States, interesting talent will continue to emerge. The cultural dissonance that these people encounter should give them plenty to write about.

Meanwhile, the proportion of readers in the United States seems to have grown, and I find it always a pleasure to see on the New York City subways ethnically diverse young people reading good books. There is no reason to worry about the future of books in the United States.

Q: What are the challenges today in book publishing and literature, as you see them?

A: On the other hand, there is much to worry about in the current state of the publishing industry, which is suffering from a severe structural crisis — the result of a highly overcentralized retail marketplace. Unlike the literary marketplace a generation ago, consisting of 4,000 to 5,000 independent booksellers, today's market is dominated by a few chains that require rapid turnover to support their expensive operations and that select their inventory centrally. This severely limits the shelf life of a book, and therefore the range of books available to readers.



Jason Epstein (John Nordell/Christian Science Monitro)

Today there are probably no more than 50 or 60 independent bookstores in the United States with inventories of 100,000 or more titles, which helps explain the success of amazon.com and other online retailers that are able to maintain extensive selections. However, these operations have not proven profitable and may eventually be impossible to sustain.

The existing supply chain is clearly obsolete and will be replaced eventually by the electronic distribution of digital files printed and bound in the form of library-quality paperbacks at point of delivery. These highly disruptive technologies now exist but cannot be deployed at this time because they will render redundant such traditional publishing functions as centralized printing, physical storage and delivery of inventory, and traditional marketing, along with the functionaries thems- elves. When these technologies are eventually deployed, the effect will be to make millions of titles widely, cheaply, and permanently available in many languages to readers throughout the world, and will constitute a second Gutenberg revolution, but on a world scale

The economic downturn does not seem to be affecting publishers' lists so far. But profits are down at some conglomerates and likely to fall further with predictable results. [The publishing firm] Bertelsmann, for example, has begun to liquidate certain fixed costs by combining divisions, intending to reduce not only its overheads but perhaps the number of its publications.

Morale in the industry is not high. An encouraging sign, however, is the proliferation of small houses, most of which have set high literary standards for themselves. The day of the conglomerates seems to me to be fading along with that of the chain booksellers whose same-store sales have been lagging for several quarters.

But people will continue to tell stories as they have been doing since the beginning of the human era, and other people will go on reading them. This suggests that the structural crisis that afflicts the publishing industry will sooner or later — and by one means or another — be overcome.

The interview with Jason Epstein was conducted by Michael J. Bandler.

Dozens, hundreds — I'm certain. Anyone who ventures to survey must prepare to live with a haunting sense of omission.

The Languages of Poetry

The poetry scene is configured by a similar plurality of modes, but what feels like abundance and variety in the world of fiction feels to many poets I've spoken with like a frustrating balkanization. A few years ago, the major division of camps was between the "formalists" and exponents of various kinds of "free" verse. The situation feels somewhat different now, with the split coming more between poets who use language in referential ways — pointing out at our common world — and those for whom language is its own self-created realm. The latter include the very visible John Ashbery and his many followers, and poets influenced by Jorie Graham, who puts the dynamic process of perception at the core of her expression. In their near vicinity, we find the poets of the experimental L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E school, including Michael Palmer, Charles Bernstein, and Lyn Hejinian, who in her long poem *Oxota* writes lines such as: "It's the principle of connection not that of causality which saves us from a bad infinity/ The word hunt is not the shadow of an accident."

The more directly referential poets branch out in a number of directions. There are the older inheritors of modernism, like former Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, Frank Bidart, Louise Glück, Charles Simic, and C.K. Williams.

Alongside them we find a cluster, mainly younger, of poets espousing a somewhat less historically conditioned idiom, including Tom Sleigh, Alan Shapiro, Rosanna Warren, Gail Mazur, and Yusef Komunyakaa on the one hand, and more formally inflected poets like William Logan, Dana Gioia (recently named as head of the National Endowment for the Arts), Brad Leithauser, Glyn Maxwell, Debora Greger, and Mary Jo Salter, on the other.

On other branches we point to more personally declarative poets like Marie Howe, Mark Doty, and Sharon Olds; the benign and lightly surreal Billy Collins, our current Poet Laureate; and the less benign, more somberly funny Stephen Dobyns. A longer survey would find ways to place the work of Thomas Lux and David Lehman, as well as the powerful singular expressions of older, more established poets such as Adrienne Rich, Robert Bly, Donald Hall, Thom Gunn, and David Ferry.

The Serious Reader Remains

Turning from poetry to the big picture of the literary world, it is safe to assert that transformations in the social and economic world have had their impact. In publishing, as in most things, money calls the dance, and the recent fiscal downturn, combined with the ongoing tendency toward corporate conglomeration (with its attendant squeeze on the "bottom line" of profits), has put pressure on small-returns literary projects. Authors have a more difficult time breaking in; editors have to work much harder to persuade their superiors to take on books that don't promise substantial sales. The old expectations, fostered when publishing was the domain of independent houses, are no longer — the independents have all but vanished.

At the same time, the bourgeoning electronic culture has made its inroads. While the much-touted electronic book (the handheld device that was to revolutionize reading) never caught on — indeed, was a major fizzle, confounding pundits everywhere — there is little question that ever more sophisticated entertainments (video, DVD, and the like) have made inroads into our reading lives, and, of course, we hear regular laments about the shrinking away of seriousness.

On the other hand — always there's that "other hand" — worthy books continue to be written, published, promoted, and read, and breakout best-sellers like *The Corrections* and *The Lovely Bones* remind everyone in the business that the avid serious reader has not disappeared. If the broader trend is toward more glitzy entertainments, we must nevertheless remark the steady proliferation of book clubs and reading groups. Dire predictions are risky, and except those that pertained to the coming of the horseless carriage, they usually have been exaggerated.***

Sven Birkerts is the author of six books, including *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age* and *My Sky Blue Trades*, a recently published memoir.

U.S. OFFICIALS LAUD ENTERTAINER BOB HOPE

Legendary showman dies at 100

U.S. officials voiced high praise for legendary entertainer Bob Hope, who died of pneumonia at his home in California July 27, two months after turning 100 years old.

Noting that Hope was known for entertaining military troops on battlefields during several generations, President Bush said the nation has "lost a great citizen."

Secretary of State Colin Powell, who watched the entertainer perform in Vietnam in 1968, said "there was no one who served his nation more faithfully and with greater dedication in both war and peace."

Hope, America's most-honored comedian, was a star of vaudeville, radio, television and film. He has been recognized with the establishment of The Bob Hope American Patriot Award. Among other awards, he received the U.S. Medal of Freedom, and an honorary knighthood from Great Britain, the country of his birth.

From World War Two during the 1940s to the Persian Gulf War in 1990, Hope traveled countless miles to U.S. military camps both in the United States and overseas during the Christmas holidays, entertaining servicemen and women in field hospitals, jungles, deserts and on aircraft carriers.

Following are the texts of remarks by Bush and Powell:

President Bush remarks

Today America lost a great citizen. We mourn the passing of Bob Hope. Bob Hope made us laugh, and he lifted our spirits. Bob Hope served our nation when he went to battlefields to entertain thousands of troops from different generations. We extend our prayers to his family. And we mourn the loss of a good man. May God bless his soul.

Bob Hope

Secretary of State Powell remarks

Bob Hope was a friend to every American GI for over 50 years. I watched him perform in Vietnam in 1968 and became his friend in later years, to include even doing a skit with him on stage. There was no one who served his nation more faithfully and with greater dedication in both war and peace. He will be greatly missed.

end text***

I, Too, Sing América

By Julia Alvarez

I **would never have** become a writer unless my family had emigrated to the United States when I was ten years old.

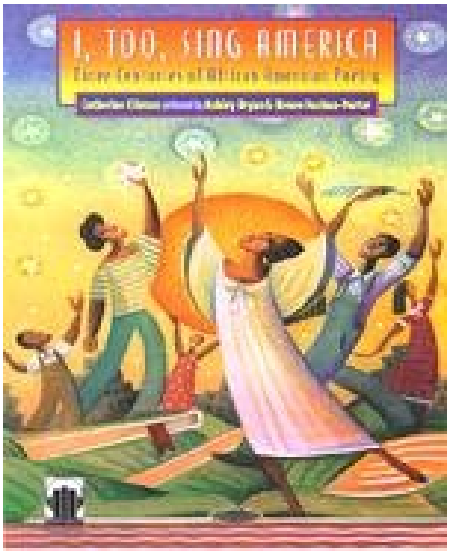
I grew up in the '50s in a dictatorship on the little Caribbean half-island of the Dominican Republic. Although it was a highly oral culture rich in storytelling, it was not a literary culture. I grew up among people who thought of reading as an antisocial activity that could ruin your health and definitely take the fun out of life.

Reading/studying was not an activity that was encouraged in my family, especially for us girls. My grandmother, who only went up to fourth grade, used to tell the story that she only picked up a book when she heard the teacher's donkey braying as it climbed up the hill to her house.

Boys had to make the *sacrificio* and get an education in order to earn a living — but in moderation. My cousin was considered strange because he not only loved to read but as a teenager began to write poetry. "*Se va a enfermar*," my aunt would say, shaking her head every time she found Juan sitting in a chair, reading a book. "He's going to get sick."

I was also growing up in a repressive and dangerous dictatorship. In a social studies class, a student wrote an essay in which he praised Trujillo, the dictator, as the true father of our country. The teacher commented that certainly Trujillo was one of the fathers of our country, but there were others. The boy, the son of a general, must have gone home and told his father. That night the teacher, his wife, and his two young children disappeared. Intellectuals, people who read and questioned, were suspect. A book in your hands might as well have been contraband.

In 1960, my father's underground activities against Trujillo were discovered, and we were forced to escape the country in a hurry. The minute we landed on American soil we became "spics" who spoke our English with heavy accents, immigrants with no money or prospects. Overnight, we had lost everything, our country, our home, our extended family structure, our language, for Spanish was the language of home, of *la familia*, of self understanding. We arrived in the United States at a time in history that was not very welcoming to people who were different,



whose skins were a different color, whose language didn't sound like English. For the first time in my life I experienced prejudice and playground cruelty. I struggled with a language and a culture I didn't understand. I was homesick and heartbroken.

My sisters and I, being young, soon rallied to the challenge. We learned the new language, the new music, the new ways to dress and behave ourselves. But our success on these fronts soon created another kind of problem in our family. My parents wanted desperately to keep us to the old standards, and yet they also wanted us to succeed in this new culture. How could we study hard and earn all A's and get ahead but be sweet and submissive and let Papi make all the decisions? How could we remember our Spanish when we were forced to speak only English outside the home? How could we keep our mouths shut out of *respeto* for our parents when in school we were being taught to speak up and debate, if need be, with our teachers? How could we get along with our friends and yet never go over to their houses for parties and sleepovers because they might have older brothers or parents who allowed things my parents did not allow?

My sisters and I were caught between worlds, value systems, languages, customs. And this was our challenge, which is the challenge for many of us who are immigrants into a new world that is different from the old one of childhood: how to maintain a connection to our traditions, our roots, *and* also to grow and flourish in our new country? How to find creative ways to combine our different worlds, values, conflicting and sometimes warring parts of our selves so that we can become more expansive, not more diminished human beings?

But the problem was that no one was thinking like that back in those days. This was the United States of the early '60s, still locked in the civil rights struggles, pre-women's movement, pre-Equal Rights Amendment movement, pre-multicultural studies, pre-anything but the melting pot, that old assimilationist, mainstreaming model. Those were the days when the model for immigration was that you came to America, you assimilated, you cut off your ties to the past and the old ways, and that was the price you paid for the privilege of being an American citizen.

But sometimes it is these painful moments that can become opportunities for expansion and self-creation. I had become a hybrid — as all of us who travel beyond an original self or hometown or homeland are bound to become. I was not a mainsteam American girl and I wasn't a totally Dominican girl anymore. And yet I wanted desperately to belong somewhere. It was this intense loneliness and desire to connect with others that led me to books. Homesick and lonely in the USA, I soon discovered that the world of the imagination was a portable homeland where everybody belonged. I began to dream that maybe I, too, could create worlds where no one would be barred.

And so, it was through the wide open doors of its literature that I truly entered this country. Reading Mr. Walt Whitman, I heard America's promise and I fell in love with my new country. "I hear America singing, its varied carols I hear." As for melting all our variety into one mainstream model, Mr. Whitman disagreed: "I am large, I contain multitudes." This country was a nation of nations, a congregation of races. "I resist anything better than my own diversity."

Was this *allowed*? I wondered, looking over my shoulder. Wasn't this subversive? But Mr. Whitman's poems were printed in my English textbook where he was described as "the poet of America." He was saying what this country was really all about. Although America seemed to have forgotten its promises, its writers remembered and reminded us.

Slowly and not without struggle, America began to listen. As the 1960s progressed into the '70s, the country around me began to change. Under pressure from its own marginalized populations and from its growing number of immigrants, the nation was being forced to acknowledge its own diversity and become more inclusive. Citizens were challenging America to be true to its promises. The first time I attended a march in support of the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution and was not hauled off to be tortured in a dark prison chamber by the secret police, I understood that a free country was not one that was free of problems or inequalities or even hypocrisies. Such failures came with the territory of being a human being. Freedom was the opportunity to shape a country, to contribute to the ongoing experiment, never tried before, of making out of the many, one nation, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. The words were not just rhetoric. It was our right and responsibility to make the words come true, for ourselves and for others.

As the nation changed, our literature began to reflect these changes as well. Not only was there a Mr. Whitman, I discovered, but a Mr. Langston Hughes.

I, too, sing America
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed --

I, too, am America.

Oh, that was music to my ears! I understood what Mr. Hughes was saying: he was claiming his place in the chorus of American song. This was an important voice for a young girl of another culture and language and background to hear.

But the publishing world dragged its feet. In the early '80s, when I started sending out my manuscripts, the major publishers and mainstream market were reluctant to take a chance on new voices. Until they noticed that Afro-American literature had become a serious component of many college curriculums. That readers were buying up copies of Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Oscar Hijuelos, Sandra Cisneros, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Gish Jen. The complexion of literary Americans had changed.

In 1991 when I was 41 years old, after over 25 years of struggling, my first novel, *How the García Girls lost Their Accents*, was published by a small publisher willing to take a chance on a new voice. Eleven years later the book has been adopted as a text in many high schools and colleges. I, too, am now singing America.

I tell this story of my struggle to become an American writer because it was a struggle I shared with a country that was also struggling to become a more inclusive and representative nation. I feel lucky and privileged to have been part of this historical process. America gave me the gift of helping me discover and cultivate my talents. I would not have become a writer had I not come to this country as a young girl in 1960.

But as President Kennedy said, a few months after our arrival in this country, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." My debt to my country is to pass on that opportunity to others. "The function of freedom," Toni Morrison has said, "is to free someone else." My work as well as my vote contribute to the richness and diversity of the whole. By our active and committed presence as citizens of different ethnicities, races, traditions, and linguistic backgrounds, we challenge America to expand its understanding and compassion and thus grow stronger as a nation. We infuse its literature with new energy. We sing new rhythms, inflections, stories, traditions into the whole.

But my responsibility does not stop within the American borders. Unlike the old model of immigration, many of us immigrants continue to go back to where we originally came from. With the vast migrations and mobility of the second half of this passing century, most of us no longer fit the tight definitions of identity

A native of the Dominican Republic, **Julia Alvarez** came to the United States when she was young — yet, her Spanish-speaking heritage has illuminated her literary work in English. Alvarez writes that, thanks to a grant from Phillips Andover Academy in 1980, "I took a summer off to try my hand at writing fiction, for my own Island background was steeped in a tradition of storytelling that I wanted to explore in prose," a decision that helped her become a writer of novels, as well as of prize-winning verse, and books for young readers.

Her published work includes *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, a novel (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1991), *In The Time of the Butterflies*, a novel (Algonquin, 1994), *The Other Side*, poems (Dutton, 1995), *Homecoming: New and Collected Poems* (New York: Plume, 1996), *¡YO!*, a novel (Algonquin: 1997), and *In The Name of Salomé*, a novel (Algonquin, 2000), and much other work.

Julia Alvarez received a B.A. degree from Middlebury College, in Vermont, in 1971, and a Masters in Creative Writing from Syracuse University in 1975. She has frequently taught on the staff of the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and has held teaching positions at Phillips Andover Academy; the University of Vermont; George Washington University, Washington, D.C.; and the University of Illinois at Urbana. She is currently writer-in-residence at Middlebury College.

Alvarez was named "woman of the year" by *Latina Magazine* in 2000. In that same year she journeyed to the Dominican Republic to attend the inauguration of the new president, as part of the official U.S. delegation. *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* was picked by New York Librarians as one of 21 classics for the 21st century. *In the Time of the Butterflies* was selected a Notable Book in 1994 by the American Library Association, and was a Book of the Month Club choice in that year. Her poem "Bookmaking" appeared in *The Best American Poetry 1991*. In addition to many other awards and honors, Ms. Alvarez has been elected to the National Members Council of the PEN American Center.

"Because of my current involvement in a sustainable organic farm with a literacy center in the mountains of the Dominican Republic, I've become interested in children's literature," Alvarez writes. She has recently published "three books for young readers," including *The Secret Footprints* (New York: Knopf, 2000) and *How Tía Lola Came to Stay* (New York: Knopf, 2001).***

we were born into. Last year in California I met an Afro-Dominican-American who had married a Japanese woman and had a little baby. Their son is an Afro-Dominican-Japanese-American. My Dominicana sister is married to a Danish man; her kids know Danish, English, and Spanish, and you know what they love to eat, *arroz con habichuelas* with pickled herrings. We are becoming a planet of racial and cultural hybrids. We need an open mind and a big heart and a compassionate imagination to allow for all the combinations we are becoming as a nation and as a human family. Mr. Whitman's words remind us: "The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. . . Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. . . . and the American bard shall be kosmos. . . . glad to pass any thing to any one."

To create this kind of nation is to present a model of a world where we all belong. But this America can only be achieved if each person is free to be the rich and complex person he or she is. The dangers to be reductive are tempting, to hole down in our racial and ethnic bunkers and forget that out of the *pluribus* we have to make *unum*, one human family.

I would go even further and say that to embrace our selves in all our complexity and richness and also to embrace the multiplicity of selves out there — that is our challenge not just as Americans but as human beings. Robert Desnos, the French poet who died in a concentration camp, once said: "The challenge of being a human being is not only to be oneself, but to become each one." Terrence, the Roman slave who freed himself with his writing, put it another way, "I am a human being," he said. " Nothing human is alien to me." By becoming all we can individually be and by never forgetting our responsibility of helping each other achieve that same goal, we can create a nation and a world where everyone belongs and where each and every one of us has our song.

In this spirit, I see myself more and more as an American writer, not just in the national but in the hemispheric sense. With my roots in the southern part of the Americas (my stories, my history, my traditions, my Spanish and Caribbean rhythms) and my training and experience and flowering in the northern part of the hemisphere, I am truly an all-American writer:

I, Too, Sing América.

I know it's been said before
but not in this voice
of the plátano
and the mango,
marimba y bongó,
not in this sancocho
of inglés
con español.

Ay sí,
it's my turn
to oh say
what I see,
I'm going to sing America!
with all América
inside me:
from the soles
of Tierra del Fuego
to the thin waist
of Chiriquí
up the spine of the Mississippi
through the heartland
of the Yanquis
to the great plain face of Canada --
all of us
singing America,
the whole hemispheric
familia
belting our canción,
singing our brown skin
into that white
and red and blue song --
the big song
that sings
all America,
el canto
que cuenta
con toda América:
un *new song*!

Ya llegó el momento,
our moment
under the sun --
ese sol *that shines*
on everyone.

So, hit it maestro!
give us that Latin beat,
¡Uno-dos-tres!
One-two-three!
Ay sí,
(y bilingually):
Yo también soy América
*I, too, am America.****

MULTICULTURAL 'VOICES'

"Far from being an indicator of the demise of western civilization, multicultural literature is the affirmation of the most fundamental principle of a democracy: to give all people an equal voice.... Each voice is valid and valuable. And the more open we are to listening to these diverse voices, the more enriched and enlarged our own lives will be."

Amy Ling, Chinese American scholar-author (deceased)

"As a writer, I've tried to consider most importantly my life as a Native American who is absolutely related to the land and all that that means culturally, politically, personally. Nothing is separate from me in that sense, and I am included with the earth and its aspects and details."

Simon J. Ortiz, Native American poet of Acoma Pueblo heritage

"As a writer, you carry the world inside you. I carry a map of Kerala in my heart. I walk by Central Park [in New York City], see the trees and find inspiration for a story or poem set in Kerala."

Meena Alexander, Indian American poet, essayist and novelist

"Literature is part of culture, culture is that meeting-place. We must care where people come from in order to respect the fact that they have origins, they have parents and grandparents, they have music, dancing, poetry. There is great pleasure in diversity."

D.H. Melhem, Lebanese American poet

"If you look at all my work, ...that commonality, this thread that runs through them all is this need to understand where you came from in order to understand what you must do or how you can move from the present to any future..."

August Wilson, black American playwright

"Even when I'm praised, so much of the time what they say over and over is, `Oh, it's so American!' as though that needs to be said. I still have to contend with, do I speak English? I could never have written the title story in Who's Irish?...until I was firmly established as a writer of English. It's an ongoing problem for Asian Americans, but I also have to say that it's interesting to me, because that's where the inner self bumps up against society. We're all constructs, we're all compromises

between what we've experienced and how we're perceived."

Gish Jen, Chinese American novelist

"My mission, if you will, is to get Americans to realize that we have to work together to second-by-second redefine what American culture is and what the total heritage is. I can be just as much an American writer writing the kind of material that I do as a [Don] Delillo writing his last novel about baseball. There are many Americans, and it's sensitizing people to accept us as part of the fabric and not just simply adumbrations."

Bharati Mukherjee, Indian American novelist

"When one is telling a story and one is using words to tell the story, each word that one is speaking has a story of its own, too. Often the speakers, or tellers, will go into these word stories, creating an elaborate structure of stories within stories. This structure, which becomes very apparent in the actual telling of a story, informs contemporary Pueblo writing and storytelling as well as the traditional narratives. This perspective on narrative — of story within story, the idea that one story is only the beginning of many stories and the sense that stories never truly end — represents an important contribution of Native American cultures to the English language."

Leslie Marmon Silko, a Laguna Pueblo (Native American) writer of fiction and poetry

"Language is a combat between individuals, a combat with the self. Language betrays us. It doesn't always do what we want it to do. I love that disarray. It's where we're human."

Anna Deavere Smith, black American playwright

"My poems and stories often begin with the voices of our neighbors, mostly Mexican American, always inventive and surprising. I never get tired of mixtures."

Naomi Shihab Nye, Arab American poet of Palestinian extraction

"My influences are sometimes the language of ceremony and transformation, sometimes science. I research my work and think of how to translate a different world view, a different way to live with this world. I try to keep up on contemporary poetry, not only American, but in translation and from other countries as well."

Linda Hogan, Native American poet of Chickasaw heritage

"For me, multicultural literature is a source of vitality for American culture, and for the English language. There always have been marginal forces that have broadened the mainstream, throughout the history of American literature. They develop, and flourish and enrich the literature and the language. Diversity is always a good thing. It's the source of life, and the richness and abundance of a culture."

Ha Jin, Chinese American novelist, National Book Award winner, 1999

"All literature, and certainly Chicano literature, reflects, in its more formal aspects, the mythos of the people, and the writings speak to the underlying philosophical assumptions which form the particular world view of culture... In a real sense, the mythologies of the Americas are the only mythologies of all of us, whether we are newly arrived or whether we have been here for centuries."

Rudolfo Anaya, Hispanic American novelist

"The mainstream of American literature is being redefined. It's no longer a literature of `the other,' or the margins. It is reflecting more and more who we are as Americans. People writing in this new tradition are quite privileged, I think, in that they are at interesting borders and crossroads of culture. They're a part of it, and also slightly outside of it. It's a unique position, perspective and time. Also, the borders are where a lot of interesting literature is happening, where cultures are rubbing up against one another, where different languages are struggling to accommodate one another. And English is changing because of this."

Cristina Garcia, Cuban American novelist

Report From Richard Quashigah on Agricultural Biotechnology Trip to US

I have always nursed the desire of visiting the world's most influential nation, USA. But little did it occur to me that the opportunity was to come in a year I lest expected. After all, I returned from the UK in December 2002 after fourteen solid months in the cold when I missed my favorite Ghanaian dishes. Traveling to another cold country was basically out of my dictionary for 2003. But to resist an opportunity of going to US was difficult for me. Let me recount some of the niceties and hangovers of my two weeks tour of the six states in the world's super power. To start with, it is pertinent to note that I was part of a team of seven African journalists invited by the US State Department to listen to American side of genetically modified foods debate, which is to campaign for the use of biotechnology in agriculture to increase crop yields. Apart from the vigorous campaigns by environmental NGOs against bio-tech,

Richard Quashigah

which they allege is a threat to the environment and human health, what impacted heavily against the argument for

genetically modified foods was the EU's ban on GM foods from the US.

After a long arduous flight from Accra to my transit point Amsterdam where I spent six hours of waiting for a connecting flight to the unofficial capital of the world, Washington DC, it dawned on me that I was in for a Herculean and possibly an uninteresting tour. This thought was influenced by the numerous scientists on my itinerary who were to brief us about Biotechnology. The entire meeting rather turned out interesting and informing.

I arrived at the plush Jury's Washington Hotel on the New Hampshire Avenue of DC on Sunday June 1 rather exhausted after nearly two days of air travel. A quick shower and a cozy bed were all I needed and Jury's provided more than that. I was up early prepared for my first appointment and rather anxious to meet for the first time my other six African colleague journalists on the tour from southern and eastern Africa. Down the lobby, I quickly exchanged pleasantries with the other participants, from Zambia, Uganda, Mozambique and South Africa. Breakfast at Jury's was exciting, extremely enjoyable. Elaine Papazian, our program officer from the State Department, was a very nice woman of middle age. She was very accommodating and understanding. Our one-week investigative tour of Washington DC took us to meetings with policy-makers, scientists and politicians. We asked very probing questions on the subject of biotechnology: some to the point of challenging the experts. There were several points of disagreements with some experts and policy makers we met. The fact is many of us went on the tour with already prejudiced minds about biotechnology use in agriculture. But the patience of most of those who painstakingly had to explain issues to us was like that of a saint. Patrick from Uganda, for one himself an expert on the subject, tried to frustrate our guests at some appointments. There was Tammer from Africa with her unending barrage of questions, some of which took us by surprise. For me, what was comforting was the sincerity with which our questions about the risks of GM foods were answered.

Of all the places and people we visited, the tour of the Capitol Hill, the number two symbol of power in the world, and interactions with Senator for Iowa State, Sen. Charles Grassley, were the most impressive. We interacted with Senator Grassley in particular because his state, Iowa, which we visited, is famous for its corn and soybeans production and other bio-engineered crops. The Senator, himself a corn and soybeans farmer, recounted how the use of biotech has increased his yields from the same acreage of farm land compared to the past when he solely depended on insecticides to control pests. It is interesting to know that the average farmer in the US farms 1600 acres of land alone. One of his assistants, a very hilarious gentleman who had the intention of visiting Ghana because of its closeness to his friends in Togo, took us on a tour of the Capitol Hill - the most recognized symbol of democratic government in the world. Capitol Hill is where the US Congress has been housed since 1800 and where laws were made and American Presidents were inaugurated. In fact, it's about the most magnificent place I ever visited in my whole life. It is a living history, the heart of American pride. We chanced to catch the Senate as well as the House of Representatives in session. For me, it was a moment to spot my favorite American lady politician, Senator Hillary Clinton, in the Chamber.

I stayed in the US for two weeks, and during that time ate food with genetically modified elements, because that is what everybody in the US eats. Americans have been doing so the last seven years without any problems. All the pharmaceuticals, cereals and a host of imported consumables into this country have some amount of GM in them. So why do we now turn to trouble our pretty heads over non-existent dangers over the consumption of what is genetically modified? After all the EU now has accepted the safely and suitability of GM foods. This should hopefully put the controversy to rest.***

POEMS: 'Solar Plexus' and 'Reviewing Three Portraits'

By Madeline DeFrees
Originally appeared in Ploughshares,
Vol. 2, No. 1

Madeline DeFrees was born in Ontario, Oregon in 1919 and moved to Hillsboro in 1923. After graduation from St. Mary's Academy in Portland, she entered the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, where she was known for many years as Sister Mary Gilbert. After receiving a B.A. degree from Maryhurst College and an M.A. from the University of Oregon, she taught at Holy Names College in Spokane from 1950 to 1967. While still a nun, she taught at the University of Montana, in Missoula, from 1967 to 1979. In late 1973 she was dispensed from her religious vows. She taught at the University of Massachusetts from 1979 to 1985, after which she retired to Seattle.

DeFrees is the author of seven full-length poetry collections, including *Blue Dusk* (Copper Canyon, 2001), winner of the 2002 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize and a Washington Book Award, and two chapbooks, as well as two non-fiction books about convent life. She has received a Guggenheim Fellowship in Poetry and a grant from The National Endowment for the Arts.

Madeline Defrees is the author of six poetry collections, including the forthcoming *Blue Dusk: New & Selected Poems, 1951-2001.* She has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation, and her poems have recently appeared in *Urban Nature, Visiting Emily, The Ohio Review,* and *The Extraordinary Tide.*

Madeline DeFrees

Solar Plexus

The word was somber. What it might have meant,
its origin and weight, uncertain under shade
as the dark face below the ratified
sombrero. Eyes it gave the lie to overshadowed
where sun wheels higher than missing trees.
The hoopoo's lim downcurving bill complements
the Old World crest, flamboyant color in the unitary
sun. Signs are best for exploration when
they point all ways at once, romanced by moons,
the lunar theories of lunatics and orphans.
In sleep delivered from the skull's unsleeping round,
the still solarium admits a frenzied light.
Sun webs ray out. The sleeper gives himself
to evening shoals. What knotted hungers weave
under the proud serape, under the Aztec sash?
Braid the dusky hair below the crown of straw
day fires? The bird darkens to coal.
His rock-drill beak spins to the diamond seam.

Reviewing Three Portraits

Two clocks out of synch watch faces of night
drift by. One face, a lacquered saint, dredged up
from a trunk, wrapped in virgin wool, black
robes of justice trapped in the vault of a bank.
An 18-karat guarantee of stainless steel and peerless
dentistry, though you'd have to pry the mouth open
to discover that. A high-priced portrait photographer
in Chicago crossed her nervous hands on a Rule Book
and said, "Don't smile!"

Steel girders support the lifted face, the smoky hair
and smoky voice exhaling clouded lines. A four-wheel
drive studio, props in every back street
and a live camera that really moved. Peeling paint,
thin pulse in the temple, faint warnings of early
snow: shadows, assurance, perspective. Nothing
has been left out of this head shot because it was not
pretty. He said, "Let your hair blow anywhere it wants
and go right on shouting your poems."

In this quick candid, everything turns grey. Impartial
light circles the hair. Something live as the nerve
of a tooth crosses the route from forehead to clavicle.
Lash and brow serene as in that common face on the silk pillow.
Soft music saying, You must not call this by its real name.
See, I have cosmetized the lid, kept the slack jaw
in line, disposed beads at throat and wrist.
It is not your time — not yet — says the paid mortician
stroking dead hands strapped in place.

MY EXPERIENCE IN THE U.S.

By Solomon Mensah,
Information Resource Center (IRC), Staff

Introduction

Under the sponsorship of the US Government, I was one of the twenty-four who participated in this year's Foreign Service National Employee Program (FSNEP) for employees of Information Resource Centers (IRCs) of the US Missions.

The training was held in Washington, D.C. (May17 – 31), Madison, WI (May 31 – June 6 and New York (June 6 – 12).

Participants

Mission Posts represented were; Tunis, St. Petersburg, Lahore, Sarajevo, Bishkek, Shanghai, Manama, Jakarta, Copenhagen, Manila, Panama, Mexico City, Hanoi, Tallinn, Kuala Lumpur, Accra, Monrovia, Harare, Chennai, San Salvador, Antananarivo, Sapporo, Mumbai and Minsk.

Solomon Mensah receives a certificate of participation after the training.

Arrival & Orientation

We had an exciting orientation tour of D.C. a day after our arrival (May17). Places toured included; The White House, Capital Hill, the Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt's monuments. Monuments of the Vietnam and Korean veterans were also visited. They were all beautiful sites.

Training

During the training, we had lectures and presentations on the following topics:

- How to ask a reference question & How to use the reference Database
- American Cultural Values
- Appreciating differences in the workplace & improving communication
- U.S. Legislation and Legal Resources
- U.S. Government Agencies and their Information Products
- Governance Structures
- Searching for U.S. Information on the Internet

We were also trained on the effective us under listed Centrally Funded Databases

- FACTIVA, GALENET and LEXIS-NEXIS.

Solomon Mensah (third from right front roll), in a group photograph with participants.

We also had some time to share ideas on "best practices" at various posts.

Training Tours / Trips

As part of the training, visits were made to selected places of interest and relevance. They were:

In D.C. - The Capitol Building, Senate (in session), U.S. Supreme Court, Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Building, Foreign Press Center (FPC), Ralph Bunche Library situated in the State Department Building, Center for Strategic Studies (CSIS), and Heritage Foundation.

In Madison, WI – We had a day's trip to Old World Wisconsin Town, a museum depicting the history and life of the early settlers of the State of Wisconsin. Other places visited during our training at the Wisconsin University were: The Legislative Reference Bureau (where Wisconsin legislation is written), State Capitol Building, Circuit Court, State Law Library, Grants Information Center of the University of Wisconsin (UW), State Historical Library (full depository library) and UW School of Journalism.

We left Madison for the New York City to participate the Special Libraries Association (SLA) conference.

SLA Conference (June 6 – 12)

Saturday, June 7 –

SLA Conference begins.

Participants registered for SLA conference in the morning and continued with a tour of Manhattan with a local historian.

Sunday, June 8 –

Various lecture sessions went throughout the day.

There was an evening of reception for all SLA conference participants. During the reception, we (FSNEP participants) were among a number of distinguished personalities introduced to the gathering. It was exciting to see our IROs; Wendy, Holly, Luella, Stephen and others with us at the conference - we were overwhelmed.

Wednesday June 9 - 11

Conference continued with lecture sessions, exhibitions, tours etc. (We made a tour of the United Nations Library Headquarters on Monday, June 9 and continued with the various lecture sessions.

We also made a special tour of the Library Journal offices in the afternoon of Tuesday, June 10.

The conference ended on the evening of Wednesday, June 11

CONCLUSIONS

At the end of the training, participants had:

· Enhanced ability to evaluate information from Internet web sites as well as from printed and commercial electronic sources through the study of specific sources in the U.S. such as think tanks, newspapers, federal state governments, and others.

· Increased understanding of U.S. government, society, culture, and values. Exchanged ideas with fellow FSNs regarding the day-to-day work of the Department of State's Information and Cultural programs.

· Observed resources and services of state-of-the-art information resource centers and libraries through visits to Library of Congress, the State Department Foreign Press Center and the Ralph Bunche Library, University of Wisconsin and the State of Wisconsin libraries as well as specialized private sector libraries.

· Engaged in discussion of problems and issues of common professional concern and exchange ideas with fellow Department colleagues regarding new information technologies and Department of State International Information Program (IIP) products.

· Enhanced appreciation of information resource methodologies by attending meetings and through exposure to vendors' courses and demonstrations held at the annual conference of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) in New York City, June 7 – 11, 2003.

APPRECIATION

I wish to express my appreciation first and foremost to the Director of Accra PAS for making it possible for me to participate in this training program; I also wish to express my appreciation to Ann Holland, IIP/G/IR Professional Development Officer, Mary Whiteman, Public Diplomacy FSN Training Coordinator, FSI, Bill Richey, Public Diplomacy Training Officer, FSI, Barbara Conaty and everyone who did so much to make the training a success.

It was an experience worth having.***

US Ambassador Presides at SSH and DHRF Grant-Signing Ceremonies

Ambassador Yates giving her remarks

H.E. Mary Carlin Yates, US Ambassador to Ghana, officiated today at two signing ceremonies: one for the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program and one for the Democracy and Human Rights Program.

The Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program (SSH) began in 1964 and was initiated in Ghana in 1990. The Special Self-Help Program encourages projects that promote individual and community empowerment through increased access to education, health, vocational training, and sanitation. As the name indicates, the Self-Help Program is designed to assist Ghanaian communities with projects that they initiate and plan themselves. The American Embassy in Accra has funded SSH grants totaling $1,168,400 from 1990-2003. The 2003 grant total is $75,000, which will fund 20 projects. The community projects range from education and income generation to health, sanitation and housing. Ambassador Yates noted that in this year's Special Self-Help Program, there was some priority given to the needy in the northern sector and to Muslim communities.

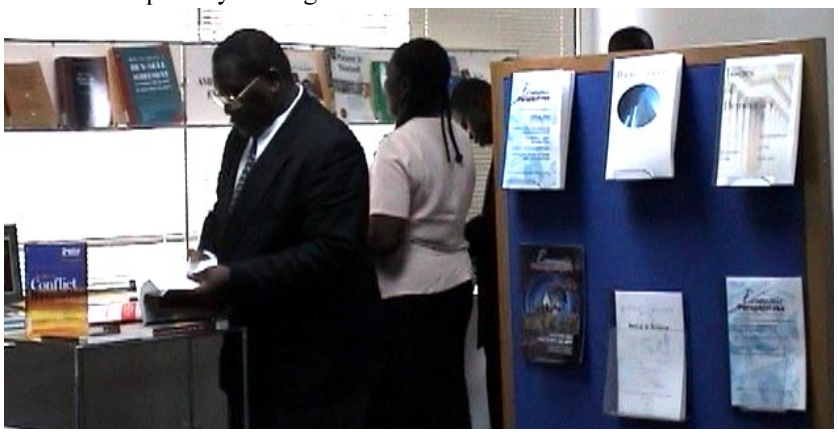
The Democracy and Human Rights Program (DHRF) is under the guidance of the US Ambassador and considers proposals that support democracy and good governance and protect and advocate for all human rights. Areas of interest to the DHRF program include human rights, education, legal education, judicial efficiency, civic education, women and children's rights, conflict resolution and independent electoral commissions. Total funding for 2003 projects is $75,000, which will be shared among 11 projects throughout Ghana. The seven organizations present at the signing ceremony will work on projects dealing with the education on the Ghanaian Constitution, children with intellectual dis-abilities, child trafficking, helping potential disabled candidates for Parliament, assisting former prison inmates and conflict resolution.***

Below: *Recepients of Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) with Ambassador Yates (sitted middle), after the signing ceremony*

"The American Legal Experience: A New Collection of Books at The Martin Luther King Information Resource Center".

On July 30, 2003, thirty-five private legal practitioners, state attorneys and law faculty members, including Members of Parliament, participated in the opening day ceremony of our book display and a Power Point presentation on "Best Legal Resources on the Internet". The book display and Power Point presentation were held at the Public Affairs Section's Martin Luther King Information Resource Center.

The objective of this program was to empower legal practitioners by providing them the means to acquire information that will enable them to be better informed on important legal issues facing Ghana by using the American Experience. There is also a need to promote more accessibility to – and transparency of – legal ethics and processes. The book display and Power Point presentation demonstrated the possibilities both print material and the Internet offer to enhance legal research and to improve the legal system.



Photos: *Some of the participants of the Book Display and Power Point presentation at the book stands. Below is Mr. Charles Akpalu (left), Director of Martin Luther King Information Resource Center (IRC), explains some points to some of the participants.*

The participants were extremely enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn about available print materials and to learn about Internet resources available for their research needs. The attendees thanked the Public Affairs Section for organizing the program and expressed their desire to purchase the books on display. Participants were especially appreciative of our Regional Information Resource Officer, Wendy Simmons, and our Information Resource Center Director, Charles Akpalu, who gave them valuable insights into the role of US legal system in human rights and democracy.***

U.S. Embassy Mission Personnel Donate Books To Daycare School at Buduburam Refugee Camp

Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Gribbin, Carla Nadeau, U.S. Regional Refugee Coordinator for Admissions, Stacey Lasseter, Assistant Refugee Coordinator and Thomas Albrecht, Representative, UNHCR recently traveled to the Buduburam Settlement in Gomoa District for a book donation. The Refugee Coordinator Office arranged for a pool of book donations by Embassy mission personnel for the PRM-funded Women Committee Drop-In Center, a facility dedicated to providing young refugee children with daycare at Buduburam. Currently, the center consists only of benches and a blackboard with no other materials.

Since the 1990's, Buduburam Settlement at Gomoa district in the central region has been accomodating tens of thousands of Liberian refugees, some of whom are former Liberian Government officials and political leaders. The settlement gets support from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and other human rights agencies, as well as from Embassies in West Africa.

The U.S. government is the largest supporter of UNHCR programs, accounting for approximately 25% of the UNHCR budget. In 2003, the U.S. has made an initial pledge of $125 million for support to UNHCR programs throughout the world. To date $69 million has been distributed, with close to half of that amount going towards refugee support programs in Africa.***

Mr. Robert Gribbin, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission presenting the books to the officials of the Daycare School.

Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Mr. Robert Gribbin (middle), discussing some issues with two medical officers (right), of the camp, before the books donation. With them is Mr. Thomas Albrecht (left), Representative, UNHCR.

BRIEFS from...

MARTIN LUTHER KING CENTER

LINKS TO AMERICAN LITERATURE ONLINE

Academy of American Poets
Contains essays on poetry, biographies of more than 200 poets, text of nearly 600 poems, and RealAudio of eighty poems read by their authors.
http://www.poets.org/

American Studies@UVA Hypertexts
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/hypertex.html

The Atlantic Online
Print and audio versions of interviews, reviews, essays, poetry, and short stories from The Atlantic Monthly.
http://www.theatlantic.com/

Bartleby Library: Great Books Online
http://www.bartleby.com/

Bibliomania: History of American Literature
Contains: Early Colonial Literature. 1607-1700; The Eighteenth Century; The Beginning Of The Nineteenth Century; Philosophy And Romance; The New England Poets; General Literary Development; Recent Years.
http://www.bibliomania.com/2/3/270/frameset.html

Digital Schomburg African American Women Writers of the 19th Century
http://digital.nypl.org/schomburg/writers_aa19/intro.html

Documenting the American South
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A Digitized Library of Southern Literature, Beginnings to 1920.
http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/southlit/southlit.html

Humanities Text Initiative
http://www.hti.umich.edu/

The Internet Poetry Archive
This multi-media archive contains the work of living poets from around the world.
http://www.ibiblio.org/ipa/about.poetry.html

Key Sites on American Literature
http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/oal/amlitweb.htm

List of E-Book Publishers
http://computercrowsnest.com/greennebula/dir_publishers.htm

Literature
http://www.usembassy.de/usa/arts-literature.htm

The Nineteenth Century in Print: The Making of America in Books and Periodicals
Part of the American Memory project at the Library of Congress, this collection of books and periodicals draws from the combined resources of LC, Cornell University Library, and the University of Michigan Library.
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/moahtml/ncphome.html

The On-Line Books Page
http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/

Poet's Corner
An online anthology of over 6,000 poems ranging from medieval ballads to interpretations of American Indian chants.
http://www.geocities.com/~spanoudi/poems/index.html

Project Gutenberg
http://promo.net/pg/

Representative Poetry Online
Produced by the University of Toronto, this anthology includes about 2,350 English poems by 368 poets from Caedmon to the work of living poets today.
http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/rp/intro.html

American Literature Overviews

Outline of American Literature
U.S. Information Agency
http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/oal/oaltoc.htm

Selected American Authors Overview
http://usinfo.org/Litera_e.htm

Contemporary U.S. Literature: Multicultural Perspectives
U.S. Department of State, February 2000
All of U.S. literature is multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial from precolonial days to the present. At one moment in history or another, one grouping may have defined multiculturalism, in that timeframe, such as the European cultures that flowed intothe United States 100 years ago, and those of Asia and Latin America in the year 2000.
http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0200/ijse/toc.htm

Theater and Drama Overviews

The Theater
Library of Congress
http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/perform/guide/theater.html

U.S. Theater in the Nineties
from USIA Electronic Journal
http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0698/ijse/theater.htm

Spotlight Biography: Musical Theater
Smithsonian Institution
http://educate.si.edu/spotlight/musical.html

AMERICAN LITERATURE - GENERAL

African American Literature
http://www.usc.edu/isd/archives/ethnicstudies/africanamerican/black_lit_main.html Maintained at the University of Southern California, provides links to resources on African-American literature, literary criticism, articles, dissertations, and general reference materials, as well as links to specific genres of literature — poetry, drama, novels, and short fiction.

African American Writers: Online E-texts
http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/afroonline.htm
Includes biographical information on as well as the writings of a host of African-American writers, ranging over time from Jupiter Hammon in the 1700s to contemporary writers.

American Authors on the Web
http://lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/AmeLit.html
A very comprehensive site from Nagoya University that presents a chronological listing of almost 800 American authors and includes biographical authors and/or writing samples for the majority of them.

American Collection: Educators Site
http://ncteamericancollection.org/
A Web site posted in connection with a U.S. Public Broadcasting Service television series on nine American authors. Designed for educators, the site contains teaching resources, lesson plans, background information, and author profiles. The site also includes an "American Writing Gateway" that links to Web sites focused on some 50 of America's most prominent authors.

A Celebration of Women Writers
http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/
A comprehensive site that lists upwards of 900 American women writers from the country's beginning until the present time and includes links to information on and the works of many of them. Also includes links to women writers in some 90 other countries. A product of the School of Computer Science at Carnegie-Mellon University.

Electronic Archives for Teaching the American Literatures
http://www.georgetown.edu/tamlit/tamlit-home.html
Contains essays, syllabi, bibliographies, and other resources for teaching the multiple literatures of the United States; created and maintained by the Center for Electronic Projects in American Culture Studies at Georgetown University.

Index of Native American Book Resources
http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources/indices/NAbooks.html
Includes extensive links to organizations, online and printed journals, and presses specializing in Native American literature, as well as links to books with Native American content, home pages for Native American authors, and much more.

Norton Websource to American Literature
http://www.wwnorton.com/naal/
An online companion to The Norton Anthnology of American Literature (fifth edition) covering 120 American writers. The site provides for each writer a brief biography, "an exploration" in which one of the writer's works is examined, and a list of other sites to consult. The site also groups this information by "topic clusters," permitting comparison of works of the same genré or time period.

Poets.Org
http://www.poets.org/index.cfm
Maintained by the Academy of American Poets, this site includes biographies, photos, and other information on more than 200 hundred poets and some 600 poems. The site features a unique "listening booth" in which the Web reader can also hear 80 poets, predominantly American, read their own works.

Voces Americanas/American Voices
http://www.humanities-interactive.org/vocesamericanas/index.html
A highly graphic page based on an exhibit sponsored by the Texas Humanities Resource Center; images from the title pages of numerous literary works representing Latino heritage through the years are interspersed with descriptions of their contents.

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE AND POETRY

Modern & Contemporary American Poetry
http://dept.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/home.html
Links to course materials for a American poetry virtual reality environment. Maintained by Alan Filreis, a professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania.

The Poetry and Prose of the Harlem Renaissance
http://www.nku.edu/~diesmanj/poetryindex.html
Provides biographical information on many talented African-American writers of the 1920s, along with numerous examples of their work.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